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# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup>

Parker-Varney School  
Manchester NH

*make the difference!*



## Six ways to have old-fashioned, unplugged fun with your child

In today's culture, play is almost an endangered species. Kids too often think that "fun" means watching a TV show or playing a video game.

But there are lots of old-fashioned ways that children can learn to have a good time. Here are six ideas that can get you started with some old-fashioned, unplugged fun:

1. **Bake something together.** Bake bread and take turns kneading and pounding the dough. (This is especially good after a hard day.) Or bake cookies and take some to a neighbor or an older relative.
2. **Tell stories.** Tell your child the true story of when your hair turned bright blue. (Kids especially love stories that feature parents making a mistake.) Share stories of when your family overcame challenges or hardships.

3. **Play catch.** If you can't get outside, toss a beanbag or a soft ball. If you can get to a park, try kicking the ball as well as tossing it.
4. **Collect leaves.** Place them between sheets of absorbent paper. Pile a heavy book on top. After a few days, they will be preserved.
5. **Sing.** Start with old favorites like "Row, row, row your boat." Sing songs you remember from your childhood. Make your own instruments from pots, pans and other things you find around your house.
6. **Read aloud.** At what age do kids get too old to enjoy being read to? Never. Sometimes, take turns and let others in the family do the reading.

Source: Betsy Taylor, *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy*, ISBN: 0-446-52964-8, Warner Books.

## Simple habits will lead to school success



Your child may have a math test next Tuesday. Or she may be taking a test at the end of

the marking period. Later in the year, she'll probably take state tests.

Whatever test she's facing, there are a few tips that can help her be successful:

- **Encourage regular review.** The best way to study for a test is not to study just for that test. That's because regular study and review is the best way for a child to learn.
- **Be sure your child goes to school every day.** When your child is there as the teacher is presenting information, she has a chance to ask questions. She can practice a skill and then have her teacher check her work.
- **Help your child get organized.** Each day, help your child make a list of everything that's due the next day. If there is a big test next week, help her divide study material into smaller sections.

Source: "Test Taking Tips for Parents," [www.testtakingtips.com/parents/index.htm](http://www.testtakingtips.com/parents/index.htm).

# Show your child that it is important to play by the rules



"You don't win silver. You lose gold." That was the unfortunate message in an ad that ran during a recent Olympics.

This win-at-any-costs approach to life is bound to affect our kids. Whether they're playing sports or sitting in classrooms, too many kids these days think that winning is more important than following rules. Here are ways you can teach your child to respect rules and authority:

- **Be a good role model.** Let your child see that you follow the rules. Sometimes, it's the little things you do that send the loudest message. If you have 16 items, don't get in the Express Line if the limit is 10.
- **Think about your own agenda.** Do you have dreams that your child may one day be the next superstar? Will you be crushed if your child doesn't get into a top-rated college? When kids get the

message that winning is all that's important, they'll do whatever it takes to come out on top.

- **You set the rules.** It's your job to teach your child how to get along with others. This means, as basketball player Julius Irving once said, knowing "how to win without bragging and lose without crying."
- **Look for teachable moments.** If someone drives through a stop sign, talk about it. "That person put her needs ahead of the safety of children. That's not right."

Source: Carlton Kendrick, "Tips to Play Fair By," [www.parentingbookmark.com/pages/ArticleCK01.htm](http://www.parentingbookmark.com/pages/ArticleCK01.htm).

**"The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change."**

—Carl Rogers

# Use grocery store ads to help your child practice math skills



Those grocery store ads that come every week are a great way for your child to practice math facts.

With their bright pictures and large numbers, they are easy even for young children to use.

Look through the ads together. Help your child find pictures of a few foods he likes. Cut out these pictures along with their prices.

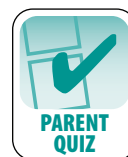
Now have him create math word problems using the pictures he's cut out. "Emma bought one pound of bananas for 50 cents. How much would two pounds of bananas cost?"

You could ask an older child what half a pound of bananas would cost. Or you could ask him to tell you how much change he'd get from a dollar. Later, use the word problems your child developed to create flash cards with the picture and the problem on the front and the answer on the back.

Check the ads as you prepare your shopping list. Choose a few items for your child to buy. Have him estimate how much it will cost to purchase all these items. This teaches him the important skill of estimation.

Source: Judi Hechtman and Deborah Ellermeyer, *Teaching Math with Favorite Picture Books*, ISBN: 0-5907-6250-8, Scholastic Professional Books.

# Are you helping your child have great attendance?



Being in school every day—and on time—will help your child do well. Are you supporting your child's attendance habit?

Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you told your child that you expect her to go to school every day?** If you tell her it's important to you, it will become important to her.
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you ignore weak excuses?** Not feeling like getting out of bed isn't a good reason to stay home. Don't discuss it or raise your voice. Just tell her she must go to school. It's a rule.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you keep your child home if she's sick?**
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you try to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours?**
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you help your child set the alarm clock earlier if she has trouble getting to school before the bell?**

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you are supporting your child's attendance. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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# Here's how to answer the 'Why do we have to learn this?' question



She's learning fractions, and she's frustrated.

"Why do I have to learn this anyway?" she fumes.

That's when you can step in. Your child simply doesn't know all the times in her life that she's going to have to use fractions. But you do. And when you share that with her, she'll be more motivated to pay attention in school.

So help her apply what she's learning. Head into the kitchen and make a recipe together. What happens if you don't have a ½ teaspoon

measure? You can use the ¼ teaspoon spoon as long as you use it twice.

Sometimes, the connection to real life won't be quite that clear. But you can ask her to compare what she's studying to her own life. "When was a time that you felt like that?"

Talk about how you use school skills every day. "When the clerk gave me back my change, I recalculated and discovered I was owed \$2."

**Source:** Bob Sullo, *The Motivated Student: Unlocking the Enthusiasm for Learning*, ISBN: 9781-4166-0810-3, ASCD Books.

## Building your child's social skills can give learning a big boost



Students learn much more at school than reading, writing, math and other important subjects. In every class,

they practice getting along. This is important because research shows problems with social skills can interfere with learning. Without social skills, it's hard to succeed in school or in life. Some activities that reinforce social skills at home include:

- **Role modeling.** Children notice how parents interact with others. Do you introduce yourself to new people? Get together with friends? Support people you care about? Let your child see you being a good friend.
- **Reading stories.** There are countless children's books about friendship. Ask the librarian to help you find some that match your child's age and interests, such as *Lost and Found*, by Oliver Jeffers. After reading, talk about the story.
- **Role playing.** Kids need help practicing manners. Before going to the park, for example, you and your child might pretend you're meeting new people. "Hi, I'm Jacob. Nice to meet you!" Also focus on sharing and kindness.
- **Socializing.** Give your child opportunities to spend time with kids. Invite friends to play. Go to storytime at the library. Visit busy playgrounds. Sign your child up for kids' programs at community centers, museums and elsewhere.
- **Relax.** Children don't need lots of friends. Just one good buddy is fine, as long as your child cooperates well with others. If you have any concerns, talk with his teacher and work together on solutions.

**Sources:** Kathryn M. Steedly, Ph.D. and others, "Social Skills and Academic Achievement," National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, [www.nichcy.org/Research/EvidenceForEducation/Documents/NICHCY\\_EE\\_Social\\_skills.pdf](http://www.nichcy.org/Research/EvidenceForEducation/Documents/NICHCY_EE_Social_skills.pdf); C. Miller, "Why Friends Are Important," Parents, [www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/friendship/why-friends-are-important/](http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/friendship/why-friends-are-important/).

**Q:** My fourth grader has an explosive temper. His teacher says it is a problem at school, and it can also cause trouble at home. When he loses his temper, he sometimes hits other children. How can I help him get his emotions under control?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Anger is a normal emotion. But the way your son expresses his anger is clearly creating problems for him at home and at school.

No one wants to be friends with a child who flies off the handle and hits others. No school will tolerate the behavior of a student who hurts others.

Start by explaining to your son that while anger is a normal emotion, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to express it. You are going to help him learn and practice the healthy ways.

The first step is to use words. Insist that your child name his feelings. "I'm angry that Jake took my toy."

When he does use words, that still doesn't mean he'll always get his way. "I know you're upset that rain cancelled your game. But you still can't be mean to your brother."

Whenever possible, both you and the teacher should try to recognize times when your child does not get angry. "Boy, it was boring waiting in that line, but you were very patient." It's important for him to see that he can control his behavior—and that people notice when he does.

Not all adults have learned these lessons. Your son will ultimately be happier if he learns to handle his anger.

—Kristen Amundson,  
The Parent Institute



# It Matters: Respect

## Children need help building self-respect



You want your child to respect others, and that starts with respecting himself. Children with self-respect are more

likely to succeed and less likely to take dangerous risks just to impress others. But what is self-respect and how does it develop?

Self-respect comes from:

- **Competence.** It feels great to be good at things. Give your child plenty of chances to learn and practice new skills—everything from reading to playing sports to doing chores.
- **Accomplishments.** Notice and compliment your child's progress. "You've read three books this week. Impressive!"
- **Confidence.** It helps to have parents who stay positive through challenges. Keep a "You can do it" attitude. Help your child see mistakes as chances to learn.
- **Freedom.** Let your child make age-appropriate choices. For example, "Would you like to wear pants or shorts today?" Give him the right amount of independence, too.
- **Support.** Show that you accept, appreciate and love your child for who he is and what he believes. Ask about his day. Listen to his answers. Help him solve problems.
- **Imitation.** If you have self-respect, your child is more likely to have it also. Be kind to yourself and believe in your worth.

**Source:** Nancy Poitou, "Helping Children Build Self-Esteem," *SelfhelpMagazine*, <http://selfhelpmagazine.com/article/build-self-esteem>.

## Help your elementary schooler see the beauty in diversity

**Y**our child knows that no two people—or families—are exactly alike. But does she accept and appreciate this? To be a successful student and grown-up, she'll need to respect people's differences. It helps to:

- **Know that kids** are naturally open minded. When parents show respect for others—through actions and words—children imitate this.
- **Learn about other cultures** by leaving your "comfort zone." Visit a new place, try a new food and read about other ways of life.
- **Tell the whole story.** People are different from one another, and they also have a lot in common. Find ways to celebrate this.



- **Speak openly about diversity** issues. It's normal for your child to notice differences. They're fascinating and amazing! Correct any stereotyping with kid-friendly explanations.

**Source:** Christopher J. Metzler, Ph.D., "Teaching Children About Diversity," PBS, [www.pbs.org/parents/experts/archive/2009/02/teaching-children-about-divers.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/experts/archive/2009/02/teaching-children-about-divers.html).

## Set an example for your child; be a respectful role model



To help your child understand respect, set an example. Show respect for her, yourself and others. Try to:

- **Be a good listener.** During conversations with your child, focus solely on her. Look at her while she's talking. Avoid interrupting.
- **Take responsibility.** Parents are human. They make mistakes. They should also apologize. "I'm sorry I raised my voice. Let me try saying that again."
- **Follow the Golden Rule.** Emphasize the importance of treating others the way you want to be treated. Match your actions to your beliefs.

- **Stay positive.** Give plenty of genuine, specific compliments. Criticism should be rare and helpful—not hurtful.
- **Appreciate individuality.** Every person has something special to offer. Make the most of life by choosing a healthy lifestyle and using your strengths.
- **Build independence.** Trust your child with age-appropriate responsibilities. Believe in her.
- **Show love.** Gestures, such as hugs and pats on the back, go a long way toward helping kids feel worthwhile, which helps them feel both respected and respectful.

**Source:** J. Shakeel, "Teaching Children Respect," *More4Kids*, [www.more4kids.info/702/teaching-children-respect/](http://www.more4kids.info/702/teaching-children-respect/).